IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1-22 and add new claim 23 as follows:

1. (Currently amended) A method for the optical inspection of a transparent protective layer ~~(14)~~ and of a colored patterned surface ~~(12)~~, whereby the transparent protective layer ~~(14)~~ at least partially covers the colored patterned surface ~~(12)~~, said method using a first source of illumination ~~(40)~~ and ~~an~~ a first imaging sensor ~~(42)~~ associated with the first source of illumination, said method comprising the steps of:

~~characterized in that,~~

illuminating said protective layer with light emitted by the first source of illumination in order to recognize defective places ~~(30)~~ inside and beneath the transparent protective layer ~~(14)~~, ~~the protective layer (14) is illuminated with light emitted by the source of illumination (40), whereby the~~ said first source of illumination ~~(40)~~ ~~emits~~ emitting shortwaved light in the range that is visible for the first imaging sensor, ~~(42) and~~ the light striking ~~the~~ said surface ~~penetrates~~ penetrating at least partially into the protective layer ~~(14)~~ and ~~is scattered~~ scattering at the defective places ~~(30), in that~~ ;

picking up light scattered back from the defective places ~~(30) is picked up by~~ with the first imaging sensor ~~(42)~~; and ~~in that the defective places (30) are recognized~~

recognizing the defective places by the local increase in the intensity of the light picked up by the first imaging sensor ~~(42)~~ in the area of the defective places ~~(30)~~.

2. (Currently amended) The method according to Claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the first imaging sensor ~~(42)~~ associated with the first source of illumination ~~(40)~~ is essentially only sensitive to light emitted in the wavelength range of the first source of illumination ~~(40)~~.

3. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~one of Claims 1 to 2, characterized in that~~ Claim 1, wherein the first source of illumination ~~(40)~~ and the first imaging sensor ~~(42)~~ associated

with the first source of illumination ~~(40)~~ are arranged perpendicularly above the surface of the transparent protective layer ~~(14)~~.

4. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~one of Claims 1 to 3, characterized in that~~ Claim 1, wherein the defective places ~~(30)~~ in the transparent protective layer ~~(14)~~ are turbid places.

5. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~one of Claims 1 to 4, characterized in that~~ Claim 1, wherein the light emitted by the first source of illumination ~~(40)~~ is imaged in the form of a line on the surface of the transparent protective layer ~~(14)~~ and ~~in that~~ the widening of the line caused by the back-scattered light in the area of the defective places ~~(30)~~ is detected on the surface of the protective layer ~~(14)~~ by the first imaging sensor ~~(42)~~.

6. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~one of Claims 1 to 5, characterized in that~~ Claim 1, wherein a second source of illumination ~~(46)~~ is provided that emits light at a first wavelength ~~(λ_1)~~ that excites the protective layer ~~(14)~~ to fluoresce with light at a second wavelength ~~(λ_2)~~ that is different from the first wavelength, ~~in that~~ the fluorescent light is picked up by ~~an~~ a second imaging sensor associated with the second source of illumination ~~(46)~~, and ~~in that~~ defective places ~~(50)~~ in the transparent protective layer ~~(14)~~ are recognized on the basis of local changes in the intensity of the fluorescent light.

7. (Currently amended) The method according to Claim 6, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the second imaging sensor associated with the second source of illumination ~~(46)~~ has greater sensitivity in the wavelength range of the second wavelength ~~(λ_2)~~ than in the wavelength range of the first wavelength ~~(λ_1)~~.

8. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~one of Claims 6 or 7, characterized in that~~ Claim 6, wherein the light emitted by the second source of illumination ~~(46)~~ is imaged in the form of a line on the surface of the transparent protective layer ~~(14)~~ and ~~in that~~ the change in the intensity of the line on the surface of the transparent layer ~~(14)~~ caused by changes in the intensity of the fluorescent light is detected by the second imaging sensor.

9. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~one of Claims 6 to 8, characterized in that~~ Claim 6, wherein the defective places ~~(50)~~ are areas on the colored patterned surface which are not covered by the transparent protective layer ~~(14)~~.

10. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~ Claim 6, wherein a single source of illumination ~~(41)~~ is employed as the first source of illumination ~~(40)~~ and as the second source of illumination ~~(46)~~.

11. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~ Claim 1, wherein color defects in the colored patterned surface ~~(12)~~ are detected by a color-capable imaging sensor ~~(20)~~.

12. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~ Claim 6, wherein, in order to detect defects on the surface of the transparent protective layer ~~(14)~~, a third source of illumination ~~(24)~~ emits a directed beam of light that is reflected off the surface of the protective layer ~~(14)~~, ~~in that the~~ said reflected light ~~is~~ being picked up by ~~an~~ a third imaging sensor ~~(26)~~ associated with the third source of illumination ~~(24)~~, and ~~in that~~ the defects on the surface of the transparent protective layer ~~(14)~~ are recognized on the basis of changes in the intensity of the light picked up by the third imaging sensor ~~(26)~~.

13. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~ Claim 12, wherein ~~various~~ said first, second and third imaging sensors ~~(20, 26, 42)~~ with their associated sources of illumination ~~(18, 24, 41)~~ are shielded from each other.

14. (Currently amended) The method according to Claim 13, ~~characterized in that the various~~ wherein said first, second and third imaging sensors ~~(20, 26, 42)~~ with their associated sources of illumination ~~(18, 24, 41)~~ are shielded from each other in that they operate at different, non-overlapping wavelength ranges.

15. (Currently amended) The method according to Claim 14, ~~characterized in that the first~~ wherein a single source of illumination is employed as the first source of illumination and as the

second source of illumination and said single source of illumination ~~(41)~~ and the third source of illumination ~~(24)~~ emit light in different, non-overlapping wavelength ranges and ~~in that~~ the first and third imaging sensors ~~(42, 26)~~ associated with the first and third sources of illumination ~~(41, 24)~~ are sensitive in different, non-overlapping wavelength ranges.

16. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~ Claim 1, wherein the colored patterned surfaces ~~(12)~~ and the transparent protective layer ~~(14)~~ are parts of laminate floor covering elements, whereby these laminate floor covering elements ~~(10)~~ comprise wood or plastic substrate elements ~~(10)~~ onto which multi-colored printed films ~~(11)~~ with a colored patterned surface ~~(12)~~ are arranged and which are covered by a transparent protective layer ~~(14)~~.

17. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~ Claim 1, wherein the surface of the transparent protective layer ~~(14)~~ is provided with an embossed structure.

18. (Currently amended) An arrangement for the optical inspection of a transparent protective layer ~~(14)~~ and of a colored patterned surface ~~(12)~~, whereby the transparent protective layer ~~(14)~~ at least partially covers the colored patterned surface ~~(12)~~, said arrangement comprising a first source of illumination ~~(40)~~ and ~~an~~ a first imaging sensor ~~(42)~~ associated with the first source of illumination ~~(40)~~, ~~whereby~~ the emission spectrum of the first source of illumination ~~(40)~~ ~~encompasses~~ encompassing shortwaved light that is visible for the first imaging sensor ~~(42), and whereby~~ the first imaging sensor ~~(42)~~ ~~picks~~ picking up light scattered back from defective places ~~(30)~~ inside and beneath the transparent protective layer ~~(14)~~, and the defective places ~~(30)~~ can be recognized by the local increase in the intensity of the light picked up by the first imaging sensor ~~(42)~~ in the area of the defective places ~~(30)~~.

19. (Currently amended) The arrangement according to Claim 18, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein a second source of illumination ~~(46)~~ is arranged at a distance from the transparent protective layer ~~(14)~~ to be inspected, ~~whereby~~ the second source of illumination ~~(46) emits~~ emitting light at a first wavelength that excites the protective layer ~~(14)~~ to fluoresce with light at

a second wavelength that is different from the first wavelength, and ~~in that an~~ a second imaging sensor associated with the second source of illumination ~~(46) is provided that is~~ arranged in such a way that it can pick up the fluorescent light of the protective layer ~~(14)~~, whereby defective places (30) in the transparent protective layer ~~(14)~~ can be recognized by local changes in the intensity of the fluorescent light.

20. (Currently amended) The arrangement according to ~~one of Claims 18 or 19, characterized in that~~ Claim 18, wherein a color-capable imaging sensor ~~(20)~~ is provided for detecting color defects in the colored patterned surface ~~(12)~~.

21. (Currently amended) The arrangement according to ~~one of Claims 18 to 20, characterized in that~~ Claim 19, wherein a third source of illumination ~~(24)~~ is arranged at a distance from the transparent protective layer ~~(14)~~ to be inspected~~, in that an~~ and a third imaging sensor ~~(26)~~ associated with the third source of illumination ~~(46)~~ is ~~likewise~~ arranged at a distance and at the same angle as the third source of illumination ~~(24)~~ in terms of the protective layer ~~(14)~~ to be inspected, ~~and whereby the~~ said third imaging sensor ~~(26)~~, for purposes of detecting defects on the surface of the protective layer, ~~can pick~~ picks up the light that has been emitted by the third source of illumination ~~(24)~~ and that has been reflected off the surface of the protective layer ~~(14)~~.

22. (Currently amended) The arrangement according to ~~one of Claims 19 to 20, characterized in that~~ Claim 21, wherein a color-capable imaging sensor is provided for detecting color defects in the colored patterned surface and said color-capable imaging sensor, said first and third ~~various~~ imaging sensors ~~(20, 26, 42)~~ with their associated sources of illumination ~~(46, 24, 40)~~ are optically shielded from each other.

23. (New) The arrangement according to Claim 19, wherein a color-capable imaging sensor is provided for detecting color defects in the colored patterned surface.